

4475.9.42
1-11

*The Happiness and Misery of a future State
considered.*

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT

THE Rev. Mr. BARKER'S MEETING,
BUTT LANE, DEPTFORD.

ON

SUNDAY the 30th of AUGUST, 1789.

By JOHN TOWNSEND,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL. K

If any Man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God.

PETER.

*If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will
they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

LUKE.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY L. WAYLAND; AND SOLD BY J. P. LEPAUD,
NO. 91, NEWGATE STREET; T. CAHUSAC, OPPO-
SITE ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH; J. MAT-
THEWS, STRAND; W. ASH, LITTLE
TOWER - STREET; T. SCOLICK,
CITY-ROAD; AND T. FITCHER,
BARBICAN. 1789.



TO THE
CONGREGATION attending the Lord's-
Day Evening Lecture, at the Rev. Mr.
BARKER'S MEETING, Butt Lane, Dept-
ford.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

THE following discourse, which was preached by the author in his regular course of visiting you, was received with all those flattering marks of partiality, which distinguish the friend from the critic, and the plain, serious Christian, from the trifling hearer, whose religion is mere speculation. Consequently, the desire (expressed by many of you) to see it in its present form, cannot be considered as a criterion what reception it will meet from others. But, whether it be approved, or despised, by the generality of its readers, the author is satisfied in his own mind, that the sentiments it contains, are drawn from Revelation; and are in themselves of infinite importance to Mankind; under this idea he warmly recommended them to you from the pulpit, and now presents them to the public eye.

A :

You

You will perceive, I think on perusing it, that as far as a Sermon delivered extempore can be recollected, it is done here: though now the first impressions made by the preaching of it, are probably somewhat abated in your minds, I fear it will fall very far short of your expectations. This Sermon does not come recommended by *any* of those excellencies, which the *critic* would require to render it even passable. There is no ingenuity in its arrangement, it is very incorrect in point of composition, and without any novelty in its sentiments; but consists of plain things, set forth in a very plain way. But such as it is, the Author devotes it to your use and commends both it, and you, to the blessing of God.

JOHN TOWNSEND.

Jamaica-Row, Rotherhithe-Road,

Sept. 8, 1789.

A S E R.

A

S E R M O N, &c.

M A T T H E W XXV. 46.

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ;
but the righteous into life eternal.*

TO what grand and important things does the Saviour call our attention, in this part of the Scripture, by telling us, *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him ; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, verse 31.* What a scene will then be presented to our view ! What a train of interesting circumstances will combine to usher in, and stand attendant upon this glorious event ! *The Angel shall swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer, Rev. x. 6. The sun shall be black,*
the

the moon shall become as blood, and the stars of heaven shall fall to the ground, Rev. vi. 12, 13. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up, 2 Peter iii. 10. The great white throne shall be set, the judge seated, the books be opened, and the dead judged out of the things which were written therein, Rev. xx. 11, 12. And what adds to the importance of all is, that we ourselves shall most assuredly be witnesses of these solemn transactions; for before him shall be gathered all nations, verse 32. The dead shall be raised, the sea, earth, and hell, shall all yield up their sacred deposits to the judgment of the great day; that great and terrible day of the Lord. And shall all these things surely come to pass! then let us seriously enquire what situation we shall occupy in that tremendous hour? Shall we be considered as enemies or friends to the *Bridegroom*? Will his countenance wear a placid smile, or an angry and indignant frown? With what kind of feelings do we realize the prospect of this day? Are they painful, or are they pleasing? It is very needful we should examine ourselves upon this subject, because, it is added, *He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats*, verse 32. When the dead are raised, judged, and separated, according to their respective states and characters, the whole will finish with

with the accomplishment of what is said in our text ; the one going into everlasting punishment ; and the other into life eternal. In discoursing upon which, I shall beg your attention to a few plain observations.

Obfv. I. After all the names, by which the professors of religion are known, the different creeds to which they assent, and the various forms of worship established among them ; yet there is but one general line of distinction to be drawn through the whole of mankind : consequently, the Scripture describes them, either as Believers or Unbelievers ; or, as my text, the Righteous, and those which are not so ; but are in a natural, unrenewed, and unrighteous state. That *there is none righteous, no, not one ;* is a truth repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, and is strictly true in its application to the children of men, as considered in their original state ; for we are *all* both Jew and Gentile, *concluded under sin*, Gal. iii. 22. *We are, by nature, the children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. We are all the subjects of a depraved, polluted nature ; *altogether as an unclean thing ; and our righteousnesses as filthy rags*, Isa. lxiv. 6. In this depraved state, the minds of unrighteous and natural men, are *enmity against God*, Rom. viii. 7. and shew themselves in open rebellion against his Perfections, Providence, and Grace. Against the last of these, as it is displayed

played in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I think I may say, there is at this time an inveterate and malicious opposition; it is looked upon with scorn and contempt, derided as a foolish and inconsistent plan, unworthy of God, and irreconcilable to reason; as well as repugnant to all the feelings of human nature. But all this is no more than the Scripture hath forewarned us should come to pass; and that hath been done before. *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23. compared with Psa. ii. 2, 3. In short, we see the unrenewed sinner forming high thoughts of himself, following the unruly and sinful inclinations of his own mind; and in his heart, conversation, and conduct, exalting himself against God, saying, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice*. In this state the sinner lives, satisfied of his own safety, pleasing himself with the things of time and sense; concluding, that when he dies, and goes into eternity, he shall fare as well as others: seeing, God is very good, and will not be over rigorous; but make allowances for the imperfections of human nature. This is the state, temper, and character of the man, when unrighteous: but mark the difference when he is brought acquainted with religion, and by grace, numbered among the righteous, whom the Lord accepts. That God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shining
into

into the heart of such a sinner, makes such discoveries to him, as fills him with astonishment, and makes him a wonder to himself. Sin, which he once considered as a mere trifle, a thing of no consequence, he finds to be exceeding sinful; and his heart is filled with shame, remorse, and guilt under a sense thereof. That God, whom he had been accustomed to esteem a God "All Mercy," he now discovers to be a God hating sin; a God whose holiness and justice obligates him to punish it. The *law*, which he supposed might be easily kept, or which, at least, would admit of a partial obedience; he finds to be so spiritual, extensive, and minute in its demands, as not to admit of one deviation, in thought, word, or deed, without denouncing its judgment against him, Gal. iii. 10. James ii. 10. and under the influence of these discoveries, he is stript of that false peace and hope, in which he once prided himself, Rom. vii. 9, 10. 11.

In this state, he lives under the most painful apprehensions of the divine displeasure: he feels there is but a step between him and eternal death. Impressed with a deep sense of his own wretchedness, and utter helplessness; he draws nigh to the throne of grace, guilty and trembling; he is ashamed so much as to *lift up his eyes to heaven, he smites on his breast, saying, God be*

B

merciful

merciful to me a sinner, Luke xviii. 13. But God does not leave him in this state; he that gave the wound, discovers the remedy: he that awakens to a sense of danger, shews the place of safety: the Spirit takes of the things of Jesus, and shews them to the sinner, John xvi. 14. He reveals the dignity of the Redeemer's person, the fulness of his grace, the efficacy of his atonement, and the sufficiency of his righteousness: in all this he beholds the suitability and ability of Christ to save the very chief of sinners: such he now esteems himself, his mind is humbled to receive salvation *by grace, through faith*, Eph. ii. 8. He is made willing, in the day of the Redeemer's power, and through unfeigned faith in him, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, becomes the happy partaker of a justifying righteousness, a new nature, and grace to bring forth the *fruits of righteousness*: and these three constitute the essential branches of a righteous man's character, and are all spoken of as inseparable parts of real religion. See Phil. iii. 9. Gal. vi. 15. Heb. xii. 14. If these things are so, let us examine ourselves, what state are we in? hath this great change in state, nature, and conduct, ever passed upon us? we must be *made righteous* (Rom. v. 19.) in all these respects; for short of this, our name, creed, and professions avail us nothing.

Obfv. II.

Obfv. II. The Righteous and the Wicked shall both exist in a future state.

In the present life it is true, *that every man in his best estate is altogether vanity.* Affliction, disease, and death are stalking abroad through all our borders; while our prospects are so bounded, our disappointments so numerous and perplexing; our most valuable and refined enjoyments, at best so insipid and uncertain, we cannot but acknowledge, *if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.* But the expectation and prospect of a future state, animates and charms the afflicted soul, enables it to hold on its way, and inspires it with contentment, amidst all the vicissitudes of this mortal life. To admit the wretched and gloomy sentiment that there is no hereafter; is to cut the very sinews of that hope, by which the Righteous have ever been supported and comforted; and takes away one of the strongest guardians of morality. I have called the doctrine of non-existence *a gloomy one*, and indeed, I think there is so much truth in the appellation, that even allowing the contrary doctrine to be false, and admitting we are to perish like the brute beast, and the belief of a future state, but a dream or a phantom: even in this point of view, it is desirable to beguile the tedious hours as we pass along the rugged and gloomy path of life; especially when we consider that

if the doctrine of a future state be but a dream, the admitting it as real, can be productive of no evil; and the rejecting it as false, can afford neither advantage nor pleasure. But, are Christians reduced to this dilemma? no, there is no need of airy dreams, or delusive fancies to amuse us. *We know in whom we have believed. We have not followed cunningly devised fables.*

The Christian may examine the objections of the sneering scoffer; and when he hath done, confidently affirm, from the combined evidence of reason, experience, and revelation, that *Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God*, Job xix. 26. Nay, the Heathens themselves, remote as they were from the fountain of spiritual knowledge; and dark as their best conceptions were on theological subjects, yet in their belief of this doctrine, they shame the infidels of this enlightened age.

To such as reject the clear and substantial evidence, by which the Scriptures are authenticated to be the Word of God; and who laugh at the whole as a mere fable; it is natural to treat the doctrine of future rewards and punishment with a daring contempt. But I own, I am greatly surprised to find any who profess to believe the truth of divine revelation, deny this doctrine a place in the Old Testament Scriptures; where it
it

is so plainly revealed ; and in proof of which, I shall select a passage or two from thence,

There are some passages in the Old Testament, which evince the doctrine of a future state, without referring particularly either to the happiness or misery of it. Our Lord affirms this doctrine was declared, when *God spake to Moses out of the bush, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: and adds, by way of comment, He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, Mark xii. 26. 27.* The language of Job corresponds: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Job xix. 25, 26.* By which it appears, that under all his distress, and in the immediate prospect of approaching dissolution, he was supported and comforted by his expectation of a future, and a better state ; which leads me to remark.

That Old Testament Saints not only looked for a future state, but for *happiness and glory* in that state. Abraham did this; *He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, Heb. xi. 10.* And again, speaking of Abraham, and all those illustrious servants of God, who preceded him; he adds, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but*
having

having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth: for they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country: and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city, Heb. xi. 13—16. We have another instance in Moses, verse 26. who was enabled to despise all the riches and glory of the world, through faith in, and an eye to that recompence of reward, which lay beyond the present life. See also Psalm xvii. 15. lxxiii. 24. Ecclef. xii. 7. John v. 39.

The Old Testament likewise points out the misery of a future state: *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*, Psalm ix. 17. To say that David meant nothing more than the grave in this place, would be making him speak absurdly: for the righteous die as well as the wicked. The meaning of David in this place, answers to another in Psalm xi. 6. *Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; and this shall be the portion of their cup.* There is one passage more out of the Old Testament, which should not be passed by, because it affirms all three. *And many*
of

of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, Dan. xii. 2.

Obfv. III. In a future state, the righteous and the wicked will be divided; one to *life*, and the other to *punishment*. Both these are now to be described. But, alas! who is sufficient for these things? Paul, after he had a vision of the heavenly glory, tells us, it was *unutterable*; and as to his anger, *who knoweth the power thereof?*

I. Of future blessedness: in speaking of which I shall consider by what metaphors it is described, and of what privileges it consists.

1. By what metaphors it is described. In this present state our minds are so clogged by flesh and sense, that our best discoveries are but as seeing *through a glass darkly*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. and of course, all our notions of God, heaven, and heavenly things, are proportionably defective. The goodness of God hath, however, condescended to the dulness of our capacities, and to the contracted nature of our imaginations, by revealing spiritual things through the medium of sensible representations and metaphors, taken from those things with which we are more conversant; so that, through this medium, they become more plain and intelligible. The apostle Peter calls
it

it an *inheritance*; and to shew its superior excellence, says, *it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. Paul, speaking of it, under the same idea, calls it, *the inheritance of the saints in light*, Col. i. 12. By the emblem of light, the apostle would shew us the glory, the joy, and the purity of heaven; for light hath splendor, excites cheerfulness, and represents holiness; and consequently is a fit emblem of that place. It is called a *Rest*, Rev. xiv. 13, and it has been viewed under this idea with much pleasure; for what natural rest is to the weary traveller, or to the worn out labourer, that is Heaven to the Christian, who hath been exercised with trials and difficulties all his days. It is called a *crown of righteousness*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. A *crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10. A *crown of glory that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. v. 4. These expressions shadow forth the *unspeakable glory and complete victory* which all shall obtain, who, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, have *fought the good fight of faith*. It is called a *heavenly country, the kingdom of God, our Father's house, the hidden treasure, and enduring substance*: in short, *it is the paradise of God*.

2. Of what does its blessedness actually consist? one part of it is the full and *perfect vision* of Jehovah's glory. In allusion to this Christ speaks, *Father I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold*

behold my glory, John xvii. 24. and Paul rejoiced in the prospect of heaven, because there he should see Jesus *face to face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12: and it is called seeing *him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. While here our largest discoveries are but small, and the light of his countenance often intercepted; but in heaven, the full beams of his glory will be displayed, and we shall be capacitated to sustain the pleasing and soul-transporting sight. Heaven will consist of more intimate, and *perfect communion* with, and the *uninterrupted enjoyment* of God. These constituted no small part of the happiness of man in his primeval state, and these make up the felicity of Christians in the present life. The foretastes they have had of it in their closets, under the word preached, and at the Lord's Table; has at times made them long for their *earthly tabernacles* to be taken down, that they might reach the perfection of this glory.

This blessedness is to consist of *perfect likeness* to God. One great part of religion in the present life is to *put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. But the full measure of this is reserved for another life, and is a grand source of happiness to glorified saints, and has always been one reason why the saints on earth desire it; hence says David, *I shall be satisfied when I*
C *awake*

awake with thy likeness, Psalm xvii. 15. Likewise the apostle John, when he shall appear we shall be like him, 1 Epist. iii. 2. The greatest burden and grief to Christians in this life is sin, under the remains of which they groan being burdened, 2. Cor. v. 4. This clogs the wheels of their affections, darkens the eye of faith, clips the wings of hope, embitters or pollutes all their pleasures, and constrains them to say with David, O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest.

The blessedness of heaven will include, an entire exemption both of body and soul, from all the imperfections and irregularities to which they are now subject. Our understandings are so dark, and our knowledge so imperfect in the present state, that many things remain either totally unintelligible; or concerning which we can at best only form conjectures, because we know but in part: but then our perceptive faculty will be so freed from the mists which covered it, as to discover through a medium so distinct and clear, that, *we shall see even as we are seen, and known even as we are known.* Our wills shall be absorbed in the will of God, our affections which here are so carnal, and unstable, shall invariably centre in God: in short, all the powers of the mind shall be pure, harmonious, and vigorous, in their respective spheres of action. Not only

only the soul but the body will share in the glory of that state. What an innumerable host of evils are they subject to here, through disease, pain, and weakness; all which enter by a thousand different channels, and cause us to groan out a languishing existence of threescore years and ten. But *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: Rev. i. 4. for our vile bodies shall be changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 21.* To conclude, eternal life excludes all evil, and includes all possible good. There, there is no body of sin and death, no fear or unbelief, no dark, wintry, lukewarm frames of heart. When we arrive there, all our corruptions shall be extinguished, all our enemies subdued, all obstructions to communion with God removed; there will be light without any darkness; life without the possibility of dying; joy without excess, and pleasure without a sting. There, there can be no pain in reflecting on the past, no distress by things present, nor any anxiety about futurity. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this is sure, whatever a God can give, or an immortal soul possess, shall go to make up the happiness of eternal life.*

How great the folly of the world, who hazard the loss of all this glory, for the pleasures of sin which are but for a season! how amazing that the heart of God's people should be so little there, and so much set on things below; where all is vanity and vexation of spirit. In how pleasing a point of view, does our own dissolution and that of our friends appear through the medium of this glory! How inevitable the exclusion of that sinner who dies without faith, regeneration, and holiness, Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. There is no alternative, either God must recede from his truth, or the sinner must be delivered from his impurity, before he can stand before the face of God with joy. This leads us to speak,

II. Of future misery. Awful subject this indeed! calculated to impress the mind with the greatest seriousness; 'tis a subject of infinite importance in religion, and should be often brought to the view of the more careless, and unthinking part of mankind, if haply they may be *persuaded by the terrors of the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 11. This like many other Scripture doctrines has grown very unpopular of late, and not a few of those who are called ministers of the gospel have expunged it from their creed, and scorn to pollute their mouths, or wound the delicacy of their hearers, by a doctrine which they do not scruple to call shocking.

shocking. Such would do well to remember they dissent from Christ and his apostles, and incur the judgment pronounced, Ezek. iii. 18. *When I say unto the wicked thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn him from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.*

1. As heaven is set forth by metaphors that are pleasing and expressive of delight, so hell is described by such as are expressive of horror, and wretchedness. It is called, 1 Pet. iii. 19, a *prison*, to express the wretchedness, shame and bondage of those who are shut up under the displeasure of God. It is called *wrath, vengeance and destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*, Rom. ix. 22. 2 Thess. i. 8. 9. The wrath of God against his enemies is described in a very majestic manner by the Prophet Nahum, i. 2. 6. *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by him.* It is called *the blackness of darkness*, Jude. xiii. To shew it is misery of the worst kind, *outer darkness* Matt. xxii. 13. To express it as
punishment

punishment in the extreme or highest degree; and *chains of darknes* to intimate their souls being sealed or bound up under it. Our Lord, calls it *everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41, and in Rev. xix. 20. it is called a *lake of fire burning with brimstone*. In which is expressed the reality and intenseness of that misery which is the portion of the wicked.

2. But of what does it actually consist? the loss of heaven and all its glory. Those things of which the happiness of eternal life consists, are now treated as having neither beauty nor value; but when the loss of them is perceived, the consciences of sinners will be roused to a keen sense thereof. The wicked in this life under losses and trials, are like the *wild bull in a net*. Isa. li. 20. Cain, when the Lord said a *fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth*, said, *my punishment is greater than I can bear*, Gen. iv. 12, 13. If it is thus with wicked men under smaller evils, how shall it be when they perceive that heaven is irrecoverably lost? what can the effect be, but *weeping, and gnashing of teeth*? Matt. xxv: 30.

In hell, all the sins of the wicked will be set in order before them, and that intolerable load of guilt which arises from them, will for ever prey upon

upon their consciences, and the terror and anguish of soul arising from hence, is very powerfully described by our Lord, Mark ix. 44. *Their worm dieth not; and the fire is not quenched.*

Another part of their misery, will be the fervent desire of deliverance, or mitigation of their torments, which will be rejected and declared impossible; see this set forth in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the former is described as saying, *Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame: But Abraham said, son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented; and beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence,* Luke xvi. 24, 25, 26.

Again, *Everlasting punishment* includes envying and grieving at the happiness of the righteous. This is plainly hinted at by our Lord as a part of their misery. *There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out,* Luke xiii. 28. It also includes shame, remorse, and self-condemnation:

demnation : shame, under a sense of the revelation of all their ungodly deeds ; remorse, in the recollection of having lost heaven, and incurred all the misery of hell, for pleasures so trifling and short-lived : self-condemnation, from a consciousness that God is just and righteous, *for every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.*

Another part of their misery arises from the company with whom they are doomed to dwell : therefore, by way of heightening the picture of their misery, they are said to have their portion with the *Devil and his Angels*, Matt. xxv. 41. To which will be added, their own familiar companions, with whom they rioted in excess, and helped forward their destruction. What reciprocal pain will they feel at the sight of each other ? and what mutual reproaches will ensue ? It is not improbable, but a fear of something like this, may be considered as the principle of the rich man's request ; *Send him (Lazarus) to my father's house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they come also into this place of torment*, Luke xvi. 27, 28.

Lastly, No small portion of wretchedness will arise from reflection. The soul will take a retrospect view of all the dissipations by which the sensual appetite was gratified : but, there is no pleasure

sure in the remembrance, they are all turned to poison; and prove so many arrows to wound the sinner's conscience. Mercies, judgments, and privileges are all called up to view, together with the momentary impressions they made upon the heart; and altogether, will probably excite some such exclamation as this, *O that I had been wise; that I had understood this; that I had considered my latter end!* Great as this misery may appear, it is further increased and aggravated by the following considerations. The punishment of the wicked is *useless* to them, neither softening the heart, atoning for sin, or in any way tending to deliverance; the sentence is gone forth: *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy let him be filthy still.* Rev. xxii. 1. It is *incessant*, there is no abatement or intermission; a short interval would be a great alleviation, but *the smোক of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,* Rev. xiv. 11. It is *unmixed sorrow*, the sorrows and afflictions of this life are born with some degree of submission, because they are blended with some comforts and blessings, but there *they drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture,* Rev. xiv. 10. It is *remediless*: there remains no more sacrifice for sin; no tears avail, no lamentations profit, repentance is never known there, and hope is for ever excluded, *as the tree falls so it lies.* It is *unutterable*, all the metaphors and images that na-

D

ture

ture can produce, and all the Scriptures say of it, fall infinitely short of fully describing it. But the finishing and crowning trait of this misery is its *duration*, which brings me to

Obfv. IV. That the happiness of heaven, and the misery of hell, both receive their full completion, from the idea of eternal duration. This fills the heavenly choirs with confidence and joy; while it drowns the wicked in expressible terror and despair. The *eternal blessedness* of the saints is not only revealed in the Scripture, but is, I believe, in general admitted by those who deny the doctrine of *eternal punishment*: it is the latter therefore which is to be the subject of our attention. Denying the eternity of hell torments, is an error which at this time is spreading among the professing world: and in general wherever it is publicly preached, it is eagerly embraced. Nor is it at all to be wondered at, when we consider that the doctrine itself is perfectly compatible with the corrupt principles of human nature. Indeed, *the rage of the day* is for a system of religion that comports with the natural dictates of the human heart. And under the influence of this principle the great champion for Socinianism has so far altered and new modelled the religion of Jesus Christ, that with some small additions it will equally well suit the conscience of either Jew, Turk, or Infidel. But then, let it be remembered,

membered, that by this mean religion is distorted, and loses its original form: nor can it be otherwise, for, in every article that the Christian religion is brought down to the taste and inclination of *natural* men, in that proportion it is rendered unlike itself. Another principle on which the spread of this doctrine may be accounted for, is the present rage for novelties and speculations among the professors of religion; many of whom are like the Athenians, whose great ambition was *to hear and tell of something new*. Now though the things or doctrines with which these persons are charmed, are nothing but old ones new modelled, or revived under new names; yet it is amazing how pleased they are, under the idea of having found something which hath not been known or believed before. It may be accounted for likewise on this ground, attendance upon gospel ordinances is become mere matter of *entertainment*; nor need I scruple to say, that the very same principle which leads the professed man of the world to the play-house or the assembly, leads many a professor to church or meeting. To spend an idle hour, and obtain a little entertainment, is the professed motive of the first; and what is there more that influences the last? Indeed, the doctrine of *limited punishment* wears a suspicious aspect, from the favourable reception it meets with among men who have no religion. I do

not mean such as make no profession of it; but rather those who, professing it, feel nothing of its power, and who, live in direct violation of its most important commands. Of these the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. iii. 5. *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*; and he adds elsewhere, *they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*, Phil. iii. 18.

Is the emancipation of the damned from their miserable state, in the contemplation of the Divine mind? (and though we die in our sins) may we comfort ourselves and others, with the thought that our misery, and that of the fallen angels, will at last be remitted? What an astonishing event would this be! an event equally grand and astonishing, as either Christ's appearance in the flesh, or his coming to judge the world: and consequently we have as good reason to expect it would be as clearly ascertained in divine Revelation; and frequently called up to our view by the prophets, our Lord, and his apostles. But search the Scriptures, and you will find, though they often dwell on the former, they do not so much as remotely hint at the latter.

But what is the doctrine of limited punishment? It is little if any thing superior to the doctrine of purgatory; but then, while it retains all the worst ingredients of that doctrine, it excludes its consistency;

tency ; for the Romish church have very properly associated with purgatory the doctrine of praying for the souls of their departed friends : and if we believe that *all* the damned shall at last be released, we ought to make such a desirable event the subject of constant and fervent prayer : and one great reason why Protestants have ever rejected such a practice, is, the belief they have, that the state of *every man* is inevitably and eternally fixed at death.

Upon what ground is the doctrine of *everlasting punishment* denied ? principally I believe upon its supposed inconsistency with *divine goodness*, and the terms by which it is expressed sometimes, importing a *limited time*. only *. It is supposed to be inconsistent with *divine goodness*, under the idea that sin is not an evil of such a nature as to deserve such a punishment ; therefore it would not be consistent with the known goodness of God to inflict it. In the views which men form of God, they are evidently partial, overlooking the regard which he invariably manifests to the honour of his own law, and to his holiness and justice in punishing its transgressors ; the demerit of

* The author does not wish it to be understood, that he thinks there are no more objections urged against this doctrine, than these two ; but as these were the only ones that occurred to his memory, at the time of delivering the sermon, he did not think himself at liberty to enlarge, in writing the sermon for the press.

whose

whose sin, is to be measured by the infinite glory of him against whom it is committed, and who, if the Scriptures are true, looks upon it with the utmost detestation and abhorrence; at the same time declaring its demerit to be such, as will justify his severest displeasure. Nahum i. 2, 6.

“A God all mercy, is a God unjust.”

But this argument against *everlasting punishment* proves *too much*; for if the demerit of sin be as trifling as these persons suppose it to be, the very same objection may be made against other dispensations of God; which upon such a principle will appear equally to militate against the *divine goodness*. I need not say such objections *may be*, but rather that they *are* already made. The ruin and curse brought upon all Adam's posterity, for his *one* transgression, Rom. v. 18, 19. The drowning of the whole world, except one family, Genesis vii. 23. The Israelites destroying the nations of Canaan, men, women, and children, by the express command of God. Deut. iii. 6. I have heard all these urged against the truth of the Scriptures; because, say the objectors, they are not compatible with our notions of the divine goodness. Alas, vain man will not cease to be wise above what is written; he will not humbly confess his own ignorance, although the *judgments of the Lord are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out*, Rom. xi. 33. Whenever we contemplate either the character or the

the conduct of Jehovah, it well becomes us to say with David, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ! it is high, I cannot attain unto it!* Psalm cxxxix. 6. It is enough for us to be assured that although clouds and darkness are round about him ; yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, Psalm xcvi. 2 : and who, though he be a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin ; yet he will by no means clear the guilty, Exod. xxxiv. 7. In short, we see, that though God is good, yet he has suffered much misery to lie upon his creatures in this present world. Angels, and some part of the human race, have been lying under his wrath for thousands of years ; and, if God can be just in suffering the former, and inflicting the latter *at all*, why not in their continuance to an unlimited duration.

2. This doctrine is likewise opposed on this ground ; that the words by which it is expressed, are sometimes taken in a limited sense. The question is not, whether the words for ever, eternal, and everlasting, are not *sometimes* used in a limited sense ; this is granted : but whether this is always naturally and necessarily so understood ? There is scarce a school-boy but could tell us, that one word will often admit of more acceptations than one ; therefore the determined sense of the word must be ascertained by the scope or connection of the place where it stands. When these

terms

terms are used in relation to the promised land, Genesis xvii. 8. to the servant, through whose ear an awl was to be thrust, Deut. xv. 17. or to any of the ordinances of the Levitical dispensation, Exod. xii. 24. in all these, and the like cases, (and they are chiefly confined to the Old Testament) the word obviously hath a limited meaning.

In proof of the doctrine of *eternal punishment*, in the sense for which we plead, I shall offer the following observations.

1. The punishment of the wicked is set forth by the same words which are used to express the duration of God himself. *The eternal God is thy refuge*, Deut. xxxiii. 27. *From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*, Psalm xc. 2. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, Heb. i. 8. Here the three principal expressions, by which the punishment of the wicked is set forth, are applied to the infinite Jehovah, and must inevitably mean endless duration; unless we suppose the existence of God to be limited. Now, if *endless duration* be the import of these phrases, when applied to God, let it be shown why they should not be understood in the same extent, when expressing the punishment of the wicked. Till it is proved, that our construction of them is against the scope of the place where they stand, or is plainly contradicted

dicted by other Scriptures, we must conclude, the punishment of sinners will be without end.

2. That the punishment of the wicked is expressed by terms which have an unequivocal meaning, and express an unlimited duration, Matt. iii. 12. *But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, Mark ix. 44. Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, Mark iii. 29. But, he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.* This passage is expounded by Matt. xii. 32. *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world neither in the world to come.* Now the plain and natural construction of these places is, that the punishment of the wicked will never cease.

3. There are Scriptures, which though they do not affirm it so decisively, yet it may be clearly infered from them, *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. v. 20.* I take the meaning of this place to be, that if they died without any better righteousness than the pharisees, there was no period of time, nor any means, in, or by, which they should obtain the blessedness of heaven. Again, Luke xvi. 26. *Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that*

E

they

they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Now though this be but a comparable, yet as our Lord in other cases set forth *real truths* under similitudes, I have no doubt he did so here, and by this *impassable gulf* meant to shadow forth the perpetual banishment of the wicked from God and glory: for this punishment is *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. There is another passage from which it is more obvious than either of those, Rev, xxii. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be so still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy let him be holy still.* The things here prophecied of are the general judgment, and the perfecting of the happiness of the saints; and when these come to pass, then shall these words be spoken, intimating that every man shall for ever abide in that state wherein death and judgment find him: and this answers to that important truth, Heb. x. 26. 27. *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* The apostle's meaning is, that all such sinners as reject Christ, and his atonement or salvation

tion, are excluded from all benefit in it, and that there is no other medium by which sinners can be delivered, but that they must be given up to despair and destruction for ever. A Christian cannot but be jealous of every doctrine which depreciates the atonement of Christ, and holds out the idea of salvation to sinners, though they die strangers to any interest in it.

4. I argue the certainty of *eternal punishment*, from those Scriptures which intimate the total cessation of the dispensation of mercy, when the resurrection and general judgment take place; this is intimated I think by our Lord, Matt. xxv. 10, 11, 12. *And they which were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; then came others and said, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not; which seems to express an entire and endless exclusion from the happiness of heaven.* We may add to this a passage in 1 Cor. xv. 24. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.* How expressive is this text to shew, that at the last day Christ, having finished the work of salvation, and there being no further dispensation of grace, shall deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to his Father, which would not be the case, if so great

great a work as the redemption of the damned was yet behind.

5. I likewise infer the *eternity* of hell from such passages as urge us to regard our soul's salvation *now, immediately*. *Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh, Matt. xxiv. 44.* Why should our Lord urge them to be thus ready, and to be waiting for his coming, but because he knew that there was no salvation wrought, nor grace bestowed, but on this side the grave? The ministers of Jesus Christ address their hearers in such language as Cor. vi. 2. *Behold now is the accepted time; Behold now is the day of salvation*, with a view to impress their minds with a sense of the importance of divine things. But the doctrine of limited punishment destroys the great and powerful principle, by which we have been stimulated in our preaching, when we have admonished sinners to fly from the wrath to come; because there is no repentance or redemption beyond the grave.

6. and lastly. The doctrine of *everlasting punishment* will appear true, from considering that it is set forth by the same word, and made parallel with eternal life in its duration, be it more or less. There is no avoiding the force of this argument; for, by parity of reasoning, if *eternal life* means an endless duration of happiness, why should not *everlasting punishment* be understood in the same extent?

extent? But if everlasting punishment means a limited duration of misery, then eternal life must mean a limited duration of happiness. In short the doctrine of limited punishment is not a doctrine of *Revelation*; it is an invention of later times; it is a doctrine according to, and after the flesh, tending to promote carnal security; open the flood-gates of licentiousness; and finally, to drown sinners in awful delusion and despair, and therefore ought to be rejected by every *serious christian*.

Inferences, from the whole. 1. The loss of this glory, and the experience of all this misery is what many experience who once laughed at them as fables; what we all deserve, Psalm. cxxx. 3. and what we should all have experienced, but for the forbearing goodness of God. Yea, it is what must be our portion still, if we are not made partakers of faith, repentance, and holiness.

2. Then we should often meditate upon the happiness and misery of a future state; what an awful division of mankind will this be. The righteous will look on Jesus with delight; the wicked call to rocks and mountains to fall on them; and hide them from his presence. The righteous as wheat shall be gathered into heaven; but the wicked as tares bound in bundles, and cast into hell; and as the door of the *bottomless pit* is closing

ing, the doleful sound of *everlasting punishment* will diffuse universal despair.

3. How ought we to prize the word of God, by which the way that leads from the one to the other is pointed out; Jesus is *the way*, John xiv. 6. He came to save sinners, and the chief of them too: and though we preach the terrors of the Lord, that we may persuade men, yet with pleasure we tell sinners, that in Jesus there is the remission of sin, and assure them that in coming to him, they shall in no wise be cast out.

4. Let us examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith or not. To which of these are we hastening, to glory, or to misery? Let us not deceive ourselves, it is not a profession, a name, a creed or a form of godliness, that will do; we must *be in Christ*; we *must be born again*, and bring forth fruit to holiness, or our end will never be everlasting life, Rom. vi. 22. May God make us all *real* Christians and enable us to *walk* as such for the Redeemer's sake. A M E N.



F I N I S.